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REPETITION OF CHARACTER NAMES IN THE MERRIWELL STORIES

by Gerald J. McIntosh



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by Gerald J. McIntosh

Gilbert Patten certainly had a lot of characters in his stories of the Merriwells in the Tip Top Weekly. I wish I knew just how many different names were used in the Merriwell saga from the beginning to the end of Tip Top and the later Merries in the pulps and publications of other sorts, books, pamphlets, articles, etc.

I'd say an average of a new character for each Merry story would be putting it mildly, indeed, at which rate it would be well over a thousand names. I should think it would run twice or thrice that, nay, even more. When I read my set of Merry tales the second time, and I read every one of them, I made a short digest of the tale in each Merry story, and carried along with the "digest" the names of the characters in that particular number, and the list is a long one indeed. I have never undertaken to see just how many there is. It would be quite a job to do so. At that I didn't jot down the occasional "Bill" or "Mike" or "Tom" or "Jerry," that popped up in, say, mention in a paragraph here and there or on a page or so. They were not of much significance. But I'll warrant that if all those who played a part that was more than just being passed along—if they could all have been assembled in one place at a given time—well, I believe it would have made a small or fair sized city of no little consequence.

Standish did a fair job of carrying these characters along in his head, mostly, I presume, though no doubt he kept lists, notes, etc. Much better than I could have done I know. But in the confusion of it all he did make a number of monumental blunders

and errors, some seemingly inexcusable. First of all and the greatest I guess was in bringing about the death of Bernard Burrage, the father of Inza. Burrage was laid to rest and Inza was in "mourning" for him. Then a couple years later Burrage appeared on the scene like a bombshell, apparently in better health. Standish explained it away by then announcing that it was Bernard's brother who had died. But I'll bet his face was "red" a long time over that mistake. In the first dozen Tip Tops there was a Prof. Hyson (Hi) Jenks at Fardale, who married the deaf old widow, Nancy Cobb. After about a year in Tip Top, they became the parents of a son. Around No. 100, all three were still at Fardale. Then, when Dick Merriwell came into the stories, after he had been at Fardale a year or so, all at once Nancy Cobb appeared at Fardale as the wife of old Prof. Zenas Gunn, and was causing him no end of grief, just as she did "Hi" Jenks. In the meantime Standish never told us what became of Jenks, whether he died or was divorced by Nancy, or what happened to their child, it not being at Fardale. It sure was a "mystery" to me which I could never fathom.

In No. 584 Jim Stretcher, he who told the tall tales of his native Missouri, appeared at Yale and was warmly greeted by Dick Merriwell as an old friend, when they had never even seen each other before. In a series of baseball stories that had appeared many months previously, Stretcher had been a member of an athletic tour led by Frank Merriwell, but at that time Dick M. was on his

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trip around the world with Brad Buckhart. Stretcher could "draw the long bow" in tall tales. Then there was the case of Duncan Ditson at Yale in No. 550, the number in which Dick enters college. Duncan told Dick he was a brother of Roland Ditson, Frank's bitter enemy at Yale. Then in a number later on in Dick's second year of Yale, Standish said that Roland and Duncan were cousins.

Standish committed many other "boners" and "errors" all throughout the run of the Weekly, a lot of them minor in importance but rank, indeed, in my estimate. The fact that he had so many to write about no doubt caused him to get "mixed-up" at times as most of us would have done. In one of the pulp Merry tales long after Tip Top folded, one of the writers—I can't say if it was Patten or not, changed the name of Bart Hodge to Bart Hodges.

Mike McTeague was the name of a character that appeared in two numbers of the Blue Hills series, 533 and 544. He was a baseball player on the Slabtown baseball team and was of the ruffianly type. In his appearance in the last number named above he was involved in a plot and helped to carry it out in the kidnaping of Madge Morgan, the "heroine of the Blue Hills." Others in the abduction attempt were captured but McTeague evidently got away, for no more was heard of him.

It is my idea that Burt L. Standish kept the name of this man and that of his general character in the back of his head, for a year or so later when he penned the Pine Point-Smoketown tales up in Maine, he again used the name of Mike McTeague as a character in those stories. Evidently, they were two different men, but certainly of the same type. The later McTeague was a sort of wharf-tender in Smoketown. A tough talking, swaggering youth with a prize-fighter build and look, and a bully in attitude, he also was a ball player on the Smoketown baseball team until kicked off. At the end he

was convicted and sentenced for helping to steal and escape with a motor boat from the Smoketown pier. The Pine Point-Smoketown series were from 587 thru 598. It was at this time I first started to read Tip Top, which was in the summer of 1907, when I was 12-13 years old. Somehow maybe for this reason I always seemed to enjoy this baseball series more than any other Burt L. wrote, but the Blue Hills series was a mighty close second. In the Blue Hills stories we had a lot of Capt. Wiley's Tall Tales, which I seemed to "fancy" a lot.

Phil Coulter was the name of a character who was a Harvard baseball pitcher in Tip Top No. 52. "Phil Coulter" was an alias of the character Tom Fox in Tip Top No. 538, an adventurer and treasure hunter in the Blue Hills. He was apparently on the "shady" side.

Charlie Creighton, a friend of Frank Merriwell, and a member of the Yale rowing crew, was a character in many of the Tip Tops below No. 100, during Frank's first two years at college. Many years later in No. 523, and many other copies preceding and succeeding it, another Charlie Creighton was a student at Fairport. This was a town not far from Fardale and Bloomfield, and this Charlie Creighton participated in many sports events against Dick Merriwell.

We all remember Harry Rattleton, the word-twisting first room-mate of Frank Merriwell when he entered Yale and who appeared so many times in the Weekly up until way past the 400th number. In one of the early New Tip Tops somewhere below No. 100, another Harry Rattleton made just one appearance, but I didn't jot it down, and can't recall which copy. This Harry Rattleton, however, emerged from the brain of some later writer of the Merriwells after Standish quit writing them and when they were rather poor tales, and I doubt if this writer had ever heard of the original stuttering Harry in the early Tip Tops.

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267. San Francisco Public Library, Civic Center, San Francisco, Calif. 94102
268. Robert W. Story, 34 Aberdeen Crescent, Bramalea, via Brampton, Ont., Canada
269. William Reinecke, 212 W. Adams St., Villa Park, Ill. 60181

There was a net increase of 9 in the membership during 1967. Three members died: Charles J. Duprez, Morris Teicher and Harold Poore. Twelve dropped from lack of interest or other reasons: Peter W. Seiter, T. Kenneth Meadway, Leo W. Lorenzo, R. J. Hussey, Harriet C. Richardson, John Riley, Irving Warshaw, Patrick Shannon, Kate Slaughterback, B. Frank Vogel, Richard Leekly and Michael Grinet. 24 new members were enrolled beginning with No. 246 above.

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NEWSY NEWS

By Ralph F. Cummings

I was surprised to get a book that I bought from W. M. Claggett a while back from his lists, the name of it being "Pawnee Bill" a Biography of Major Gordon W. Lillie, pub. by the New Mexico Press in 1958—1st edition, fine. 8 photo illust. with 9 other illustrations from Dime Novel covers, etc. and some of the chapters on Paw-

nee Bill are "Pawnee Bill's Historical Wild West Show," "Pawnee Bill's Great Far East," "The Combination With Buffalo Bill," "The Land Boomers in Indian Territory," and much more. (At one time Pawnee Bill, Major Gordon W. Lillie was a member of the Happy Hours Brotherhood in 1927 up until he died. This biography was written by Glenn Shirley—am wondering if he is H. H. Bro. member number 227? (Ed. note: He sure is.)

A FEW RARE ONES LEFT

Young Klondike No. 12, \$3; James B. Weekly, Nos. 38, 54, 51, 48, 7, 8, 10, uncut, \$6 each; Pluck and Luck, No. 384, 75c; Wide Awake Library, No. 1228 \$1.25; Detective Library Nos. 746, 564, 569, 568, 533, 505, 576, 573, 646 \$4.00 each; Beadles ½ Dime Libry. No. 100, 75c. These novels run good to fine, and guaranteed satisfactory or money refunded.

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